(d) if so, whether Government is working on a plan for production of uranium from country's reserves and their optimum utilization with a view to achieve self-reliance in the field of nuclear energy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) The Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), a constituent Unit of the Department of Atomic Energy has established 1,16,373 tonnes of Uranium resources *(in situ)* as on 1.10.2008.

(b) Adequate reserves are available in the country to support the Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) capacity of the first stage of Nuclear Power Programme. Opening of new mines /mills to recover uranium, the long gestation period involved therein and the increased demand of uranium in the nuclear power stations at high load factors have created temporary mis-match. Opening of new mines is delayed because of the delays in land acquisition, mining lease, rehabilitation, consensus of State Governments, resettlement of the affected persons, environmental clearances, resistance from NGOs etc. This has resulted in operation of reactors with the available fuel at lower capacity.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Yes, Sir. Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL), a Public Sector Undertaking under the administrative control of Department of Atomic Energy, is engaged in Uranium mining since 1967. UCIL is operating four underground mines and one opencast mine in Jharkhand and two new projects are under construction. UCIL has started construction of an underground mine and a mill in Cuddapah District (Andhra Pradesh). Another project for opening an opencast mine, three underground mines and a mill has been planned in Nalgonda District (Andhra Pradesh), which is awaiting clearance from National Environmental Appellate Authority (NEAA). In Meghalaya, an opencast mine and a mill has been planned, which is expected to start after requisite approvals. Exploratory mining is under progress at Gogi Deposit (Karnataka) and Rohil Deposit (Rajasthan) to explore the possibility of opening a mine. Techno-economic feasibility on the development of new deposit is assessed prior to the commercial operation. Besides, two projects under the Eleventh Plan with increased targets on survey and drilling by AMD to identify additional prospects have been undertaken. These measures are expected to meet the requirement of uranium for the planned nuclear power programme of the country.

Chinese incursions in Indian territory

*97. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that China continues to needle Indian forces all along the Line of Actual Control;

(b) if so, the number of times the Chinese forces have made incursions in our territory in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim during the current year;

(c) whether the matter was taken up with the Chinese Government; and

(d) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) China disputes the international boundary between India and China. Since 1993, the two Governments have

agreed to maintain peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas, without prejudice to their respective positions on the alignment of the line of actual control as well as on the boundary question. Since there is no commonly delineated LAC between India and China, situations have arisen on the ground that could have been avoided if we had a common perception of the LAC. Government take up perceived violations through established mechanisms including the Joint Working Group, the Expert Group, border personnel meetings, flag meetings and diplomatic channels.

Voluntary ban on nuclear tests

†*98.SHRI RAGHUNANDAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the process to lift the one-sided voluntary ban on nuclear tests which has been declared in the Indo-US joint declaration;

(b) its impact on the Indo-US nuclear deal, if Government conducts the nuclear tests by keeping aside the one-sided voluntary ban; and

(c) whether Government has received any assurance from US Government that fuel supply to nuclear power reactors would set up consequent upon the nuclear deal continue unabated even in the situation when India conducts the nuclear test?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Government had declared a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive tests in 1998 after Pokhran II. In the India-US Joint Statement issued on 18th July 2005, Government only reiterated its willingness to continue with its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing. There is nothing in the "Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the United States of America Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy" signed October 10, 2008, which ties the hands of Government or legally constrains our options to protect India's security and defence needs. The Agreement provides for a multi-layered consultation mechanism to protect our interests as regards uninterrupted operation of our reactors in case either party decides to terminate.

Modernization of post offices

†*99.SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is contemplating to modernize the post offices in order to accelerate and modernize the postal system; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Modernization of post offices is an ongoing programme. Upto 31.3.08 the Department modernized (Improved Ergonomics) 2504 Post Offices and computerized 9639 Post Offices. In the current year, under 'Project Arrow' 500 Post Offices are being modernized.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.